DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 996 UD 027 533

TITLE Statistical and Non-Statistical Methods for Hard to Reach Populations: Selected Case Studies of the National Urban League.
INSTITUTION National Urban League, Inc., New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE May 90
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Community; Black Youth; Case Studies; Community Surveys; *Data Collection; Federal Programs; *Qualitative Research; Research Design; *Research Methodology; *Research Utilization; Social Science Research; Socioeconomic Influences; *Statistical Analysis; Surveys

ABSTRACT

This paper describes two studies that utilize different research methods, one statistical and one non-statistical, conducted by The National Urban League to assess the needs of black communities. The first study, Black Pulse, whose purpose was to assess the conditions and attitudes of black Americans, consisted of a detailed, statistical survey of black households in 118 cities. Resulting data were used to develop an analysis of government income transfer programs. The purpose of the second study, Youth Speak Outs, was to bring attention to the problems facing black youth. It consisted of hearings and subsequent focus groups that elicited data on what youth felt were their most pressing needs. The information youth provided were to be used to help develop service initiatives in an era of reduced Federal spending for social programs. These two studies suggest that both statistical and non-statistical methods have important roles in applied research. In addition, both methods demonstrate the impact of the external changes on the utility of research. Comparing these methods can provide insights to help determine when to do costly, highly structured statistical research and when to do cheap, loosely structured non-statistical research. (JS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED320996

National Urban League, Inc.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kenneth Small
Natn Urban League

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

STATISTICAL AND NON-STATISTICAL METHODS FOR HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS: SELECTED CASE STUDIES OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

UD 027 533

Prepared By:

National Planning and Evaluation Department

MAY, 1990

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STATISTICAL AND NON-STATISTICAL METHODS FOR HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS: SELECTED CASE STUDIES OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

The National Urban League is one of the premier national human service organizations in the United States. It maintains a headquarters office, a Government Relations and Research Department in Washington, D.C., and 113 local affiliates in 34 states and the District of Columbia. The National Urban League was founded in 1910 by a group of scholars, social workers, and philanthropists concerned about the condition of blacks who had migrated to the cities of the north and Midwest from the farms of the south and the Caribbean. The mission of the organization is to promote equal opportunity for blacks, other people of color, and the poor.

Since its inception, research has been an integral part of the League's work. The organization established a Research Department in 1917 with the assistance of the Carnegie Foundation. Some local affiliates have conducted research since 1919.

Within the Urban League network, there has always been a close relationship between research and direct service activities. During the 1920s and 1930s, the League's Research and Field Services Departments collaborated to conduct a series of studies of blacks in selected local communities, including Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Tampa. These studies were in effect community needs assessments, for they documented the conditions of blacks in cities throughout the country. The data obtained from these studies were used to establish or expand local affiliates, formulate service programs within them, and provide a basis for effective advocacy and community organization.

The Urban League network's capacity to conduct research has made it highly respected within the human service arena. In addition to conducting large scale analyses of the black community, the League has conducted research on specific areas of concern. These include affordable housing, employment, and social welfare. As the problems of its constituency become more complex, the organization's research becomes more narrow in focus and methodologically refined.

In 1979 and 1980, the League's Research Department, assisted by the organization's Communications and Field Services Departments, as well as the Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. consulting firm, initiated a statistical

survey of black households in some 118 cities or metropolitan areas served by League affiliates. The purpose of this survey, which was known as the **Black Pulse**, was to assess the conditions and attitudes of black Americans on a regular basis. This assessment would in turn enable the National Urban League to determine the extent to which government, policies, programs, and services were meeting the needs of the League's constituency.

The **Black Pulse** was designed specifically to overcome some of the pitfalls which characterized conventional survey analyses. Rather than utilize an overall sample base of 1500 and a black base of 150 to 180 therein, the survey was targeted at the black community. This provided the **Black Pulse** with a sample base that was statistically representative.

The **Black Pulse** was conducted door to door in black communities throughout the country. The persons who conducted the survey were National or local Urban League staff and volunteers who received extensive training in order to enhance their sensitivities to the target population. The training included the completion of sample **Black Pulse** questionnaires (94 pages in length), role playing, and points on handling special situations (i.e., conducting interviews in housing projects and crime-ridden neighborhoods).

Because the primary purpose of the **Black Pulse** was to assess community needs, the survey was deliberately more policy and program oriented than conventional opinion polls or market research surveys. The survey included detailed sections related to education, job training, health, and housing, as well as references to services in these areas and their use by those sampled.

In other respects, however, the **Black Pulse** resembled a large scale opinion poll or market research survey. Excluding costs borne by League staff and volunteers, the survey cost $300,000. Funding was provided by the Ford Foundation ($50,000) and the Carnegie Foundation ($250,000). A project coordinator was hired to oversee the effort, including facilitate training, cleanse and code data, and generate data for analysis.

The survey was also somewhat similar to opinion polls and market research surveys from a sample design standpoint. The **Black Pulse** utilized **primary sampling units** that were based on the Census Bureau's estimates of the black population. The **PSUs** selected were also stratified by type of community (i.e., central city, suburbs, and non-metropolitan area) and region (i.e., North East, North Central, West, and South) to assure proportional representation. Because blacks are concentrated in **PSUs** which are predominantly central city or suburbs, 85 percent

of the PSUs selected were in these areas.

Within each selected primary sampling unit, four **sample points** were selected. These points were selected at random with a probability of selection proportionate to the size of the black population in each sample point. A **sample point** consisted of a census tract in the cities and suburbs. County sub-divisions were used in untracted non-metropolitan areas. About 500 **sample points** were selected for the total sample.

Within each sample point, a smaller area called a **cluster** was selected with a probability proportionate to the size of the 1970 black population. A **cluster** was made up of one or more U.S. Census blocks or a U.S. Census enumeration district. Each **cluster** was expected to contain at least 17 black households based on the 1970 Census counts.

Following cluster selection, Urban League staff and volunteers were given the task of updating 1970 Census maps and population data for each of the selected clusters. The updates were designed to determine if the blocks and enumeration districts still existed as shown on the Census maps and to make estimates of the total number of households and the percent black within each cluster. These estimates were not used to change sampling rates, but to assist staff with planning needs for interviewing.

Once this was completed, Urban League staff and volunteers were instructed to start at a randomly selected geographic point within the sample block or enumeration district sub-area. They were to then travel in an assigned direction until they had identified no more than 17 black households within the sample area boundaries. The first 17 black households identified were the only ones to be interviewed. Interviews were to be conducted with a head of household only.

As a result of this design, some 4986 black households were identified by **Black Pulse** interviewers. Successful interviews were conducted with 2774 heads of households, a response rate of 55.6 percent. This response rate is significantly higher than that of conventional opinion or market research surveys.

The sampling design, however, was not without its shortcomings. Prior to conducting the interviews, Urban League officials had hoped for a response rate of 75 percent. In addition, the **Black Pulse** survey was not a self-weighted sample. This means that the areas of sampled were of various sizes and could not be compared to one another without statistical adjustments.

The **Black Pulse** also had some problems with

non-respondents in some communities. In communities in the western region, 38 percent of the eligible persons identified refused to participate in the survey. The overall rate for non-respondents was 21 percent. Within cities or sampling areas response rates ranged from zero to 100 percent.

Despite its shortcomings, the data from the **Black Pulse** was used to develop an analysis of government income transfer programs, **The Myth of the Income Cushion for Blacks**. This report showed that despite the public's perception of many blacks abusing income transfer programs, most of these programs provided inadequate or no assistance to blacks who were eligible. These programs included AFDC, unemployment insurance, supplemental security income (SSI), food stamps, Medicaid, and public housing or rent subsidies.

Among the specific **Black Pulse** findings included in this report were:

1. 56 percent of black heads of households eligible for unemployment insurance had not received any benefits.

2. 60 percent of black households with no income from wages received no AFDC payments. Less than one in four black households (24 percent) received such payments.

3. 56 percent of black households with incomes below $6000 received no AFDC payments.

4. The majority of low income black households eligible for other benefits did not receive them: the percentage of black households earning below $6000 and receiving the following benefits are as follows:

   a. Food stamps: 51 percent
   b. Medicaid: 39 percent
   c. Free school lunches: 25 percent
   d. Supplemental Security Income: 22 percent

It should be noted that these findings were made in a period of economic stagnation. When the **Black Pulse** was conducted, both inflation and unemployment were high. Poverty was rising at an increasing rate, especially among female headed households with children under six.

Less than three years after the completion of the **Black Pulse** survey and the development of a major public policy paper, the United States elected a new President. Ronald Reagan ushered in a period of reduced social spending, a retrenchment of civil rights enforcement, and increased support for high technology military procurement programs. These changes forced the Urban League and other human service institutions to reassess the role of government in resolving social problems.

The League's response was to refocus its dwindling resources on critical areas. While employment and job training and their prerequisite, basic education, remained high on the organization's priority list, the League saw the need to concentrate its remaining resources on the conditions of black youth. In the months following Reagan's election, the League's Research and Programs Departments carefully reviewed data from the **Black Pulse**, local needs studies conducted by affiliates or other bodies, and government reports. All these data showed that blacks under the age of 25 faced the greatest risk.

At its 1982 Annual Conference, the National Urban League announced that it would launch a series of **Youth Speak Outs** throughout the United States in order to bring attention to the problems facing black youth in particular and youth in general. The **Youth Speak Outs** were to be unique in that they involved direct input from young people themselves. The information they provided would be used to help develop service initiatives in an era of reduced federal spending for social programs.

Unlike the **Black Pulse**, the **Youth Speak Outs** were designed as open ended forums. High schools, community centers, and other facilities were used in 78 cities throughout the country to hear young people aged 11 to 25 speak their minds. Presiding over these hearings were the staff of local Urban Leagues and representatives from other civic and human service organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Girls Scouts, Planned Parenthood, and the NAACP. Representatives from government agencies, school districts, local corporations, and the religious community also presided over the hearings.

Following these hearings, facilitators led focus groups to discuss certain problems in greater detail. Recorders taped these focus groups and compiled summary reports. Data from these reports was used subsequently to develop an instrument to compile uniform information from local Leagues around the country.

Once this instrument was developed, the Programs Department of the National Urban League could compile a profile of the hearing presentors and focus group participants. The department was also able to compile data on what youth felt were their most pressing needs. The needs data would then be used to assist with the development of service initiatives.

The **Youth Speak Outs** and the focus groups and needs analyses which followed were not funded by large foundations. Instead, in-kind support was provided by corporations and civic and human service organizations in localities

throughout the country. The **Youth Speak Out** model was developed by the National Urban League's Communications and Programs Departments. The Communications Department developed press materials to promote the hearings, while the Programs Department developed materials related to their format. A loaned executive from IBM did the questionnaire analysis, while a Programs Department staff person reviewed the focus group reports and tapes and transcriptions of the hearings.

The **Youth Speak Out** model therefore represents a model targeted toward a hard to reach population--black youth--which bore no direct costs. As such, the model is of particular note to organizations which a high on leveraging donated services, but low on cash. The model may lack the statistical integrity of the **Black Pulse** and similar kinds of surveys, but it is economical, easy to manage, and a source of accurate, though largely anecdotal, data.

The **Youth Speak Out** model did produce some hard data. Some 78 of the then 118 Urban League affiliates participated in the activity, a response rate of 66.1 percent. The participating affiliates heard from more than 8800 youth in cities across the country. The number of youth participating in these hearings average 113 and ranged from a low of 49 to a high of 170. Some hearings ran for one day, while others ran for up to five days. They were conducted between the fall of 1982 and the winter of 1983.

The profile of the **Youth Speak Out** participant was as follows:

1. The typical participant was a black female who was sixteen years of age.

2. 37 percent of the typical participants were from female headed households, 47 percent from two parent households.

3. The typical participant had a parent or parents who worked for a living and reported family income to be between $10,000 and $15,000.

4. The typical participant lived in a household where there were two children, including the participant.

5. The typical participant stated the following to be priority service concerns in rank order:

    1. Job training
    2. Higher education assistance
    3. Crime protection
    4. Job counseling
    5. School work assistance

6. Personal counseling
7. Birth control information
8. Parenting assistance

6. The typical participant stated the following to be the most pressing youth problems:

1. Drugs and alcohol
2. Unemployment
3. Sexuality and teen-age pregnancy
4. Education
5. Crime
6. Parental problems
7. Peer group pressure

These findings, while perhaps not surprising, led the National Urban League and its affiliate network to some conclusions different from those generated by the **Black Pulse**. The **Black Pulse** findings put pressure on the federal government to develop better solutions to the problems facing the black poor. The **Youth Speak Outs** findings put pressure on the black community, institutions contained therein, and the community at large to develop better solutions to the problems which specifically face black youth. Government was expected to play a lesser role than with the **Black Pulse** findings.

The League was able to use the findings of the **Youth Speak Outs** to leverage some support from foundations for selected youth oriented initiatives. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funded a five year initiative in primary and secondary prevention for teen-agers, the **Affiliate Development of Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting** programs network, or **ADAPP**. The Carnegie Foundation funded a three year initiative designed to promote responsible behavior in young black men, the **Male Responsibility Program**. The Ford Foundation funded another three year initiative, the **Comprehensive Competencies Program**, a case management based effort which provided remedial academic skills, employment counseling, and personal and vocational guidance. While funding for these initiatives has ended at the national level, more than forty local affiliates continue to maintain one or more of these programs with local funding.

The **Youth Speak Outs** also helped lay the foundation for the League's **National Education Initiative**. Less than two years after the completion of **Youth Speak Outs** around the country, the Delegate Assembly of the National Urban League, the body responsible for the determination of its priorities, issued a resolution on public education. That resolution called on the national organization and its affiliate network to establish a program to improve the achievement of black students in public schools. Now in its fifth year of operation, the **National Education Initiative** is in operation

in 107 of 113 cities where there is an affiliate.

The initial evaluation of the **NEI** reveals the following:

1. Approximately 110,000 persons have been served by initiative programs since it began in 1986.

2. More than $15 million has been raised to support initiative programs at the local level.

3. 66 percent of the affiliates operating programs report students have demonstrated an increase knowledge of careers and the prerequisite educational requirements.

4. 87 percent of these affiliates report parental and adult involvement in program activities.

5. 55 percent of these affiliates report that their local school board has passed a resolution on the **Education Initiative.**

The case studies presented here suggest that statistical and non-statistical methods have a role in applied research. Statistical studies such as the **Black Pulse** can provide one with a wealth of hard data for influencing policymakers. Non-statistical models such as the **Youth Speak Outs** provide more qualitative data which can be used leverage foundation support. Both have their shortcomings, but both have their place in evaluative research.

At the same time, both methods demonstrate the impact of the external changes on the utility of research. The findings of the **Black Pulse** were largely rendered useless when Ronald Reagan became President. **The Youth Speak Outs**, a largely no-frills approach to qualitative research, proved to be useful because it was implemented on the heels of the Reagan inauguration, a time when austerity was deemed fashionable. Had they been conducted in another era, their findings might have been rendered useless.

The important lesson for evaluators to learn is this: know when to do costly, highly structured statistical research and know when to do cheap, loosely structured non-statistical research. This knowledge will not only assure the utility of your research, but it will keep you gainfully employed in any political or economic environment.

Kenneth Small, Strategic Planner
National Urban League, Inc.
500 East 62nd Street
11th Floor
New York, New York 10021